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ABSTRACT

Learners enrolled in multimedia courses offered by the State University of Nebraska (SUN) during its fall 1974 and spring 1975 offerings are described. This report consists of four sections. The first provides an overview of the courses--Accounting I, Introductory Psychology, Making It Count (Computers), and Consumer Experience. The second section outlines the sources of the statistical data in this report, the registration form and the Student Information Questionnaire. In the third section it is noted that the learners were quite similar with a few exceptions. Most were women, many had some formal educational experiences, were in their thirties, and were married with children. Statistical data on enrolled learners are presented in the fourth section, in tabular form with short commentaries. Tables are provided on: mean age; distribution of sexes; marital status; family status; annual income; size of town resided in; percentage of "homemakers;" highest level of education completed; last educational experience; students previously enrolled in SUN's first offering; degree aspirations; three most important goals; and greatest concern. (LHB)

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CHARACTERISTICS OF SUN LEARNERS (First and Second Offering)

Statistical Summary No. 1

Office of
Research and Planning

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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John D. Eggert
University of Mid-America

September, 1975

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STATISTICAL SUMMARY

CHARACTERISTICS OF LEARNERS ENROLLED
IN THE FIRST TWO COURSES OFFERED
BY THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

September, 1975

This statistical summary describes learners enrolled in courses offered by the State University of Nebraska (SUN) during its Fall 1974 and Spring 1975 offerings. SUN, a project of the University of Nebraska, is a nontraditional, open learning program designed to extend postsecondary educational opportunities to persons who find it difficult to access traditional campus-based programs. SUN is one of five state programs currently affiliated with the University of Mid-America (UMA). UMA is a regional consortium of the Universities of Nebraska, Iowa State, Missouri, Kansas and Kansas State, and serves these institutions through three sets of activities: the acquisition and development of courseware for delivery in open learning programs; the planning, development and coordination of systems for the delivery of open learning; and, research and evaluation which helps inform the development of open learning programs. As of Summer 1975, SUN was the sole operational delivery system in the UMA consortium.

This report consists of four sections. The first section provides an overview of the courses included in this report. The second section outlines the sources of the statistical data in this report. The third section contains a summary of the findings. The fourth section contains statistical data on enrolled learners, in tabular form with short commentaries.

Overview of Courses

To date, SUN has offered four courses: Accounting I, Introductory Psychology, Making It Count (Computers), and Consumer Experience. The accounting and psychology courses were the only courses presented the first offering. All four courses were presented during the second offering.

Accounting I was developed entirely by UMA. It is a multimedia course consisting of a textbook, a study guide, fifteen 30-minute television programs, sixteen 30-minute audio tapes, and sixteen newspaper articles. Television programs were available through weekly statewide ETV broadcasts or through video cassettes at one of the four SUN learning centers across the state. Newspaper articles appeared in the Sunday edition of the major statewide newspaper. Typically, for each topic of instruction the enrollees were provided with a brief newspaper article, an assigned textbook section, assigned sections in the study guide, an audio tape, and a television program.

Introductory Psychology was acquired from Communication Research Machines (CRM) and the University of California at San Diego, and adapted by UMA for use in the SUN delivery system. Introductory Psychology included 15 units of instruction. Each unit consisted of a set of objectives, a reading assignment from the text, a 30-minute television program broadcast over the ETV network, and a weekly newspaper article. A study guide was also provided, designed to help students coordinate their use of the various media. In addition, the study guide contained for each unit a self-check quiz, a list of optional readings, and a description of voluntary learning projects. "Trial tests" were included in the course as a device to help the student assess his or her state of preparation for the graded exams.

Unlike Accounting I and Introductory Psychology, Making It Count, a basic course in computers, was presented during SUN's second offering only. Making It Count was acquired from Boeing Computer Services, Inc., and was presented by SUN with no alterations except for some modifications and additions to the tests, and the addition of a weekly newspaper article.

The course was designed to be viewed by a diverse audience for college credit at the sophomore level. It assumes no previous knowledge of computers or computer related subjects. Making It Count consisted of twenty 30-minute television programs broadcast over a period of ten weeks. The SUN learners were also provided with a text, a two-volume student manual and the newspaper component.

The Consumer Experience was also presented during SUN's second offering only. It was designed and produced by two faculty members at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. UMA acquired the course and offered it intact through SUN, with the addition of a UMA-produced newspaper component. The course consists of thirty 30-minute television programs, two tests, a student learning guide, and a newspaper overview of each week's lesson.

Sources of Information

There are two primary sources of information about the characteristics of SUN students: the registration form, and the Student Information Questionnaire (SIQ). The registration form is filled out once each offering by each learner. It contains very basic demographic data, such as age and sex, as well as certain administrative data. The SIQ is an extensive five-page questionnaire which was filled out and returned on a voluntary basis by 58% of the learners, covering general information, previous education, work experience, use of leisure time, resources available for study, student goals, and public relations information. This report presents the information of most general interest from these forms. The information based on the registration forms can be taken as quite an accurate portrayal of SUN's students, since such data was available on virtually all of SUN's learners. The information from the SIQ's must be viewed with some caution in that not all learners returned these forms. While preliminary analysis indicates

that those who returned the questionnaire were no different than those who did not in terms of most of the variables on the registration form, it does appear that a slightly greater proportion of women then men filled out and returned their SIQ's. There may be other undiscovered biases. Nevertheless, given a 58% return, the thirteen tables presented herein should provide a fairly accurate picture of our present learners.

Summary of Findings

The learners enrolled in the first and second offerings of SUN courses were quite similar, with a few exceptions. There were proportionately more women enrolled in the first offering than in the second (77% versus 63%). A related change was the decrease in proportion of persons who identified themselves as homemakers (32% in the first offering, 23% in the second), and the tendency of second offering learners to have had formal educational experiences slightly more recently. Also, fewer first offering learners than second offering learners had at least some college experience (37% versus 50%). The average age fell from 39.2 to 36.1, and the median annual income of enrollees fell from approximately $12,000 to approximately $10,000. The learners in the second offering tended to select career related goals more often than first offering learners.

Most (82%) SUN learners are married and most (82%) have children. Slightly over half of those with children indicated their children were "mostly grown" as opposed to "mostly young." Enrollments came from the various sized towns roughly in proportion to the numbers of Nebraskans residing in such towns.

About two-thirds of SUN students hope to obtain some degree. The most common concern expressed before starting the course was with academic and learning problems. Persons who had enrolled with SUN for the first

offering comprised 13% of the second offering enrollments, including 25% of the enrollments in the two courses not previously offered by SUN.

Table 1. Mean Age of SUN Learners

	TOTAL Both Offerings N=960	First Offering			Second Offering				
		Total N=617	Accounting N=410	Psychology N=265	Total N=343	Accounting N=130	Psychology N=94	Computers N=77	Consumerism N=79
Mean Age	38.1	39.2	39.6	38.6	36.1	35.1	35.7	36.5	34.7

Source: Registration Forms

Comment: The average age of the learners in the second offering is about three years less than that of learners in the first offering.

Table 2. Distribution of Sexes of SUN Learners

	TOTAL Both Offerings N=962	First Offering			Second Offering				
		Total N=617	Accounting N=410	Psychology N=265	Total N=345	Accounting N=130	Psychology N=94	Computers N=78	Consumerism N=79
Male	28%	23%	27%	17%	37%	40%	40%	47%	23%
Female	72%	77%	73%	83%	63%	60%	60%	53%	77%

Source: Registration Forms

Comment: While there have been more women than men enrolled in every course offered, the proportion of men enrolled in SUN courses increased from the first to the second offering. The Consumer Experience had the lowest proportion of men enrolled, and Making It Count had the highest.

Table 3. Marital Status of SUN Learners

	TOTAL Both Offerings N=674	First Offering			Second Offering				
		Total N=366	Accounting N=231	Psychology N-198	Total N=208	Accounting N=88	Psychology N=58	Computers N=40	Consumerism N=40
Married	79%	82%	85%	79%	74%	74%	69%	88%	75%
Single	13%	11%	9%	15%	16%	15%	19%	10%	23%
Widowed, Divorced, etc.	7%	6%	6%	6%	10%	11%	12%	2%	3%

Source: Student Information Questionnaire

Comment: The large majority of persons enrolled in SUN courses are married.

Table 4. Family Status of SUN Learners

	TOTAL Both Offerings N=504	First Offering			Second Offering				
		Total N=325	Accounting N=205	Psychology N=177	Total N=179	Accounting N=73	Psychology N=49	Computers N=37	Consumerism N=35
Mostly Grown Children	47%	46%	46%	46%	49%	56%	47%	57%	54%
Mostly Young Children	34%	36%	36%	36%	30%	26%	39%	24%	17%
No Children	18%	16%	16%	16%	21%	18%	14%	19%	29%

Source: Student Information Questionnaire

Comment: Most of SUN's learners have children, but more of them have "mostly grown children" than "mostly young children."

Table 5. Annual Income from All Sources, Before Taxes, as Reported by SUN Learners

	TOTAL Both Offerings N=504	First Offering			Second Offering				
		Total N=321	Accounting N=200	Psychology N=178	Total N=183	Accounting N=82	Psychology N=50	Computers N=35	Consumerism N=33
Less than $1000	7%	9%	6%	10%	3%	1%	0%	3%	6%
1,001-4,000	9%	6%	6%	6%	13%	15%	12%	11%	6%
4,001-7,000	11%	9%	9%	9%	15%	21%	14%	0%	15%
7,001-10,000	18%	18%	18%	19%	18%	18%	16%	23%	18%
10,001-15,000	25%	24%	26%	21%	26%	22%	30%	29%	30%
15,001-20,000	16%	17%	16%	17%	14%	12%	18%	14%	18%
20,001-30,000	8%	9%	11%	8%	7%	6%	8%	9%	3%
30,001-40,000	3%	4%	4%	4%	2%	2%	2%	3%	0%
40,000 +	3%	4%	4%	4%	2%	2%	0%	9%	3%

Source: Student Information Questionnaire

Comment: The median income of learners who reported their income on the SIQ form was approximately $12,000 in the first offering, and $10,000 in the second offering.

Table 6. Size of Town Resided in by SUN Learners

	TOTAL Both Offerings N=565	First Offering			Second Offering				
		Total N=363	Accounting N=230	Psychology N=197	Total N=202	Accounting N=84	Psychology N=57	Computers N=39	Consumerism N=40
Farm or Ranch	21%	22%	20%	25%	18%	21%	19%	5%	25%
Under 2,000	15%	17%	18%	17%	12%	15%	4%	15%	7%
2,000-10,000	14%	15%	15%	16%	13%	12%	12%	13%	18%
10,000-50,000	13%	9%	10%	9%	20%	14%	26%	23%	20%
Over 50,000	36%	36%	38%	34%	37%	37%	39%	44%	30%

Source: Student Information Questionnaire

Comment: The distribution of learners across towns of various sizes is similar for each course and each offering, and has been shown to closely parallel the distribution of the Nebraskan population in general (See Working Paper #1, and 1974 Final Report).

Table 7. Percentage of Persons Identifying Themselves as "Homemakers" among SUN Learners

	TOTAL Both Offerings N=960	First Offering Total N=617	Accounting N=410	Psychology N=265	Second Offering Total N=343	Accounting N=130	Psychology N=94	Computers N=77	Consumerism N=79
Homemakers	31%	36%	32%	41%	23%	20%	16%	16%	43%

Source: Registration Form

Comment: A smaller proportion of homemakers enrolled in the second offering, with the exception of Consumer Experience, which attracted a much higher proportion of homemakers.

Table 8. Highest Level of Education Completed by SUN Learners

	TOTAL Both Offerings N=570	First Offering			Second Offering				
		Total N=364	Accounting N=230	Psychology N=198	Total N=206	Accounting N=88	Psychology N=56	Computers N=40	Consumerism N=40
Less than High School	4%	5%	4%	7%	2%	0%	4%	5%	2%
High School	40%	43%	40%	48%	35%	35%	55%	25%	35%
Trade or Business School	13%	14%	13%	15%	12%	10%	16%	13%	12%
1-3 yrs. College	28%	27%	28%	26%	29%	32%	16%	23%	29%
College Graduate (4 years)	9%	6%	15%	4%	13%	15%	2%	17%	13%
Graduate Study	5%	4%	7%	1%	8%	8%	7%	17%	8%

Source: Student Information Questionnaire

Comment: The educational achievement of learners is somewhat higher in the second offering. SUN students in general are better educated than the overall Nebraskan population, 41% of whom have never finished high school. (Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1974, U.S. Department of Commerce).

Table 9. Responses of SUN Learners to the Question: "How many years has it been since you last participated in a formal educational experience?"

	TOTAL Both Offerings N=559	First Offering			Second Offering				
		Total N=356	Accounting N=194	Psychology N=204	Total N=203	Accounting N=87	Psychology N=56	Computers N=38	Consumerism N=40
Within past year	18%	15%	12%	17%	24%	18%	21%	24%	25%
Between 1-2 yrs. ago	11%	10%	7%	11%	12%	16%	8%	18%	12%
Between 3-5 yrs. ago	14%	12%	11%	12%	17%	22%	11%	26%	13%
5 or more years ago	57%	63%	70%	60%	47%	48%	52%	42%	45%

Source: Student Information Questionnaire

Comment: The enrollees of the second offering have had formal educational somewhat more recently than those of the first offering. Note the figures in this table relating to the second offering exclude the educational experienced learners who previously enrolled of those in the first offering (See Table 10).

Table 10. Percent of Students Enrolled in SUN's Second Offering Who Previously Enrolled in SUN's First Offering

	Second Offering				
	Total N=340	Accounting N=128	Psychology N=94	Computers N=77	Consumerism N=79
Percent of students previously enrolled in SUN	13%	3%	6%	25%	27%

Source: Registration Form, second offering only

Comment: The re-enrollment figures for psychology and accounting are artificially low because these two courses comprised SUN's first offering.

Table 11. Responses of SUN Learners to the Question, "What is the highest degree you hope to obtain?"

	TOTAL Both Offerings N=575	First Offering			Second Offering				
		Total N=367	Accounting N=232	Psychology N=209	Total N=208	Accounting N=88	Psychology N=58	Computers N=40	Consumerism N=40
None	37%	38%	44%	33%	34%	36%	29%	30%	33%
Associate Degree or equivalent	11%	11%	10%	14%	11%	8%	19%	15%	5%
Bachelor's Degree	30%	30%	27%	31%	31%	27%	36%	28%	38%
Some other Degree	22%	21%	20%	22%	24%	28%	16%	27%	25%

Source: Student Information Questionnaire

Comment: Approximately two-thirds of SUN's learners hope to obtain some degree.

Table 12. Distribution of Selection of Three Types of Goals as being Most Important to SUN Learners

Type of Goal	Both Offerings N=575	First Offering N=367	Second Offering N=208
Career Improvement Goals (Including attaining job related skills, developing a new career, obtaining a job related degree, improving financial or professional status, and discovering vocational interests.)	44%	40%	50%
Academic Self Concept Improvement Goals (Including "Simply, to learn," chosen by 20% of the sample, improving self image, increasing confidence in learning and using time creatively.)	30%	34%	23%
Cultural Growth and Development Goals (Including learning to be an effective citizen, becoming aware of different philosophies and cultures, increasing appreciation of art, music, and literature, becoming involved in social and political concerns, and developing an understanding of science and technology.)	16%	13%	20%

Source: Student Information Questionnaire

Comment: Career improvement goals are most important to a greater proportion of learners in the second offering than in the first offering. Learner goals have been discussed more completely elsewhere.

Table 13. The "Greatest Concern" Most Frequently Cited by SUN Learners

	TOTAL Both Offerings N=394	First Offering Total N=276	First Offering Accounting N=176	First Offering Psychology N=118	Second Offering Total N=118	Second Offering Accounting N=52	Second Offering Psychology N=32	Second Offering Computers N=19	Second Offering Consumerism N=26
Academic and learning problems	21%	20%	17%	22%	24%	27%	16%	32%	23%
Program pace, keeping up with SUN schedule	12%	14%	15%	13%	7%	2%	9%	5%	8%
Lack of time and energy	10%	12%	15%	9%	5%	4%	6%	11%	0%
Self discipline: getting down to regular work	10%	8%	7%	11%	14%	21%	9%	11%	4%
Domestic interruptions and demands	4%	2%	4%	2%	7%	8%	3%	5%	12%
Work pressures and responsibilities.	6%	5%	6%	5%	10%	12%	6%	11%	8%
TOTAL	63%	61%	64%	62%	67%	74%	49%	75%	55%

Source: Student Information Questionnaire

Comment: The totals are less than 100% since only the most frequently selected goals from the list of ten are tabled. The most frequent single concern is with "Academic and learning problems."